

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 67

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 128

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 67—Relative to School Attendance Awareness Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 20, 2013.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 67, Liu. School Attendance Awareness Month.

This measure would designate September 2013 as School Attendance Awareness Month, and would encourage public officials, educators, and communities in California to observe the month with appropriate activities and programs.

WHEREAS, Good school attendance is essential to pupil achievement and graduation, and systemic approaches are needed to reduce chronic absenteeism rates in California, with a focus starting as early as kindergarten; and

WHEREAS, Chronic absence, missing 10 percent or more of school, which can be just two or three days a month, for any reason, including both excused and unexcused absences, is a proven predictor of academic trouble; and

WHEREAS, A pupil's chronic absence is a predictor of below-grade-level reading proficiency by the third grade and course failure and eventual dropout later in that pupil's career, and chronic absence thereby weakens our communities and our local economies; and

WHEREAS, The impact of chronic absence hits low-income pupils and children of color particularly hard if they do not have the resources to make up for lost time in the classroom. Low-income pupils and children of color are more likely to face systemic barriers to getting to school, such as unreliable transportation, lack of access to health care, unstable or unaffordable housing, and even unfair disciplinary policies; and

WHEREAS, Chronic absence exacerbates the achievement gap that separates low-income pupils from their peers, since pupils from low-income families are both more likely to be chronically absent and more likely to be affected academically by missing school. Absenteeism also undermines efforts to improve struggling schools, since it is hard to measure improvement in classroom instruction if pupils are not in class to benefit from the improvement efforts; and

WHEREAS, Improving school attendance and reducing chronic absence take commitment, collaboration, and tailored approaches to address particular challenges and strengths in each community; and

WHEREAS, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, Attorney General Kamala D. Harris, and Secretary of California Health and Human Services Diana Dooley jointly hosted an interagency forum on chronic absence to encourage state and local collaboration to improve the overall health, safety, and well-being of our children by promoting public awareness and reforms that improve school attendance; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature enacted Senate Bill 1357 of the 2009–10 Regular Session to establish a definition and reporting mechanisms for chronic absence and Assembly Bill 97 of the 2013–14 Regular Session to establish chronic absence as a state priority for our schools to be included in the recently enacted local control accountability plans; and

WHEREAS, Schools and school districts must do more to track, calculate, and share the data on how many and which pupils are chronically absent so that schools and communities can work to deliver the right interventions to the right pupils; and

WHEREAS, All pupils, even those who show up regularly, are affected by chronic absence because teachers must spend time reviewing for pupils who missed lessons; and

WHEREAS, School attendance can be improved, and chronic absence significantly reduced, when schools, parents, and communities work together to monitor and promote good attendance and address hurdles that keep children from getting to school; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature designate September 2013 as School Attendance Awareness Month in the State of California, and encourages public officials, educators, and communities in California to observe the month with appropriate activities and programs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature join communities across our nation to increase awareness of the importance of school attendance by addressing attendance barriers and the root causes of chronic absence; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author and coauthors for appropriate distribution.